

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTREAL 2052

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PELLETIER POSSIBLE FACTOR IN QUEBEC LIBERAL
PARTY LEADERSHIP RACE

REF: MONTREAL 2048 (NOTAL)

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH RYAN YESTERDAY (REFTEL), HE EMPHASIZED
HIS CONTINUING CONCERN OVER FOLLOW-ON LEADERSHIP OF LE DEVOIR IF HE
WERE TO SEEK QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP. HE HAD MENTIONED
THIS IN EARLIER DISCUSSION IN NOVEMBER BUT WITH CONSIDERABLY LESS
STRESS. THIS TIME HE WAS VERY POINTED IN THIS BEING A KEY FACTOR
-- ALONG WITH HIS WIFE'S VIEWS -- NOW THAT "THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS
ARE BEING ANSWERED."

2. AT TWO-SOME DINNER LAST NIGHT, ALEX PELLETIER, WIFE OF CANADIAN
AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE, SAID GERARD PELLETIER HAD BEEN ASKED BY RYAN
TO COME HOME AND TAKE OVER THE PAPER. NOTED THEY ARE VERY HAPPY IN
PARIS BUT, IF RYAN FEELS IT A "DUTY" TO GO INTO PROVINCIAL POLITICS,
GERARD WOULD FEEL IT A DUTY TO TAKE ON LE DEVOIR. PRIOR TO BEING
EDITOR OF LA PRESSE IN EARLY 1960'S, PELLETIER WAS A REPORTER
AT LE DEVOIR. SHE ALSO SAID GERARD HAS DISCUSSED THIS WITH
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PM WHO WAS NOT HAPPY ABOUT THE IDEA BUT FELT DECISION WAS
PELLETIER'S.

3. COMMENT: RYAN MADE IT CLEAR THERE ARE NOW ONLY TWO OVER-
RIDING CONSIDERATIONS RE TAKING ON LEADERSHIP RACE: (A) FAMILY
(HIS WIFE WOULD HAVE TO GIVE UP HER OWN RATHER DISTINGUISHED
CAREER); (B) THE FUTURE OF LE DEVOIR. MME. PELLETIER SAID

MME. RYAN CALLED ON HER IN PARIS (EN ROUTE TO ROME) LAST WEEK AND WAS PREPARED FOR, BUT NOT HAPPY ABOUT, A POSSIBLE CHANGE TO THE POLITICAL SCENE. ALEX PELLETIER OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT ENJOY THE THOUGHT OF CHANGE EITHER. NONETHELESS, GERARD (WHO WAS CALLED HOME ON CONSULTATIONS AS INDICATING OF PIQUE WITH FRENCH GOVERNMENT) MAY HAVE MADE COMPLETE COMMITMENT TO RYAN, THOUGH LATTER'S EXPRESSED CONCERN ON THIS MATTER HELD NO SUCH HINT. IF THIS TRUE, IT COULD BE THE STRAW THAT BREAKS RYAN'S BACK ON QUESTION OF ENTERING LEADERSHIP RACE. ISSUE "CAN RYAN WIN AGAINST STRONG GARNEAU PUSH?" -- LATTER HAS MANY SUPPORTERS -- HAS YET TO BE SEEN. IF HE SHOULD RUN AND FAIL FOR ANY REASON, CANADA WOULD APPARENTLY PAY DEARLY. RYAN WOULD HAVE LOST ALL CREDIBILITY AS AN "INDEPENDENT" BRIDGE BETWEEN THE TWO SOLITUDES, AND PELLETIER'S WOULD BE LOST TO CANADIAN GOVERNMENT IN PARIS WHERE, REPORTEDLY, THEY ARE A GREAT SUCCESS WITH SOME KEY FIGURES AT QUAI D'ORSAY. INDEED, ONLY THROUGH LATTER WERE THEY KEPT APPRISED IN ADVANCE OF VARIOUS STATES OF PLAY RE LEVESQUE VISIT.

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